NOVACON 42

Progress Report 3

9–11 November 2012

Park Inn Hotel, Nottingham
9th – 11th November 2012

Guest of Honour: **Jaine Fenn**

Membership Rates

Adults: £40 At the door £45
13-16 years: £10 12 years and under free
Day rates: (Only available at the door)
Friday £10, Saturday £20 and Sunday £15.

Hotel Rooms

Double or Twin: £43 pppn Single: £ 61 pppn
Children: under 5 years free, 5-14 years £5 pppn (ages at the date of the convention)

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Novacon 42 Progress Report 3

Welcome to probably the most important PR of Novacon, if only because it reminds you that the convention is only a few weeks away and gives you some guidance in how to find the hotel. Talking of the hotel let me remind you of its address.

Park Inn Hotel
Mansfield Road
Nottingham
NG5 2BT

Contact details are on the opposite page.

So, in addition to vital travel details, you will find in this PR the latest information on the Programme with the schedule for Friday night. Read it and you'll know why you mustn't be late arriving.

That great fannish institutuion TAFF launches its latest compaign to send a UK/European representive across the Atlanic in our continuing efforts to convert US fans to true fannish ways! Yes nominations for the 2013 race open at Novacon. More information is on page 9.

Now don't go forgetting the Nova Awards – I didn't spend hours sweating over a hot keyboard to produce an online voting form for nothing. Mike Meara can be found on page 12 telling us why the Novas should be important to us all.

And finally, make sure you check out the latest updates from our chairnan and hotel liason supremo Tony Berry.

In this editon you will find

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Acknowledgements

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Cover artwork: Sue Mason.

Chairman's Piece

Tony Berry

Things are starting to gather pace now. We've got 200 members! Very encouraging for this time of year and could indicate a big turnout for the con. I'm sure most people are coming to see our Guest of Honour, Jaine Fenn, but I suspect that the number of this Novacon could encourage the appearance of certain fans clutching towels.

The Programme is looking good: we are continuing to emphasise the importance of Science with two guest speakers on Saturday and Sunday morning, so drag yourself out of bed at a reasonable time and get your minds expanded. On Friday evening we are throwing a party for the official launch of Jaine's short story collection *Downside Girls* with free wine and nibbles, so come and buy a copy. There will be at least one other book launch on Saturday in the downstairs bar. Watch the notice board for details. The rest of the Programme is the usual mix of panels, talks and not-so-serious stuff.

For those of you new to Novacon there is a Dealers' Room where you can buy all SF and Fantasy related merchandise, an Art Show downstairs where you can exhibit work and then on Sunday the art auction where if you're an artist you make lots of money, or if you're a punter you lose lots of money. Also downstairs is Dave Lally's programme of strange and rare entertainment (that should have sparked your interest!) and another function room for what we call off-piste programme items. There will be the usual book auction, but NOT on the main programme. After consulting with the auctioneers it has been decided to move the auction to Saturday night in the downstairs bar, which was done last year as a second auction and attracted more people than the main one! If you wish to auction books, please drop them off at Registration with your name clearly visible, otherwise they will be sold and the proceeds go to the convention. For both Art and Book auctions, Novacon takes 10 percent of sales.

Sunday evening sees the usual Beer-Tasting and Hot Food. To get the beer free you need to contribute at least THREE bottles of British or Worldwide beer (the more unusual the better) which you give to Registration and receive a beer badge in return. Or you can just buy a badge for £5.00. The hot food is served at the same time and to get this you MUST buy a ticket in advance from Registration. Soft drinks will also be available and these are free to everyone.

Novacon is run by volunteers and we always need help on the day. If you want to be a gopher report to Registration and tell us what you are willing to do. In return for helping out you will receive Groats, which are gopher reward vouchers that can be spent over the bar.

DIRE WARNINGS. Both the hotel and Novacon committee take a dim view of people crashing in rooms or bringing in their own food and drink, so please don't do it. Remember to wear your name badge so we can see who is supposed to be there and who isn't! Please drink responsibly ha ha ha who am I kidding? See you there.

Novacon 42 and the Meaning of ...

Jim Mowatt

The Park Inn in Nottingham is filled with nooks and crannies of all shapes and sizes. Into some of these have been placed curious items of great worth by those odd bods of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Appreciation Society, namely ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha. These are badges sporting the number 42 or a special badge bearing the logo of the society. Seek and find these badges and they will bring you points. Collect together lots of points and treasure shall rain down upon you. 42 day badges are worth one point and ZZ9 logo badges are worth 5 points. The 42 treasure hunt ends at 22:00 on Saturday. Jim and/or Carrie will be in the hotel bar and will accept your badges, count them up, and award the prize. You can hunt alone or in a team of up to four people. We reserve the right to penalise anyone we think is up to shenanigans.

This year's ZZ9 Annual General Meeting is being held during Novacon 42. The convention is clearly the answer to Life, the Universe and Everything. We excitedly pointed this out to the con committee, who cowered behind a sofa, asked us to go away, and suggested that they might call the police. We took this to mean that they wanted us to commemorate this momentous occasion by producing 42 copies of a magazine celebrating all things forty-twoy and handing it out to 42 people at Novacon 42. Yes, we're sure that's exactly what they meant.

Soooooooooooooooo, look out for ZZ9's 42 magazine at the convention.

Hotel Update

Tony Berry

Last time I looked the hotel was still there and we're all looking forward to returning to Nottingham for Novacon. Once again, on Friday evening only, there will be a carvery in the restaurant as well as the over-counter con food. This will speed things up for those of you who want a sit-down meal as pretty well everyone eats in on Friday and it can get a little overwhelming for the kitchen staff!

Our Guest of Honour has chosen the food for the Sunday evening to go with the beer tasting. Jaine does not eat meat (shock! horror!) but does eat fish, so the emphasis will be on more vegetarian fare and seafood things. Well, the carnivores have had it all their way until now, but don't worry, there will be at least one meat dish!

The downstairs bar will again be open on Friday and Saturday evenings only so please make use of it. When it is not open it is still available as a lounge area, and we are planning other stuff in there including at least one book launch. Saturday afternoon though it is being taken over by a private function – the Hitchhiker fans are holding their AGM at Novacon this year. I wonder why?

If you have a room in the hotel and are going to arrive after 4pm on Friday, remember to ring the hotel to guarantee your booking. The number is 0115 935 9988.

Speaking of rooms, a couple of people have wondered why we pay what we do when there are special offers available which seem to offer a cheaper rate. The answer is that it's all part of a package that we negotiate with the hotel a year in advance. The convention gets a discount on con food and a large discount on the cost of function space for the weekend, along with other little concessions which make things more enjoyable. Also some of these "cheap" deals are not all they seem: breakfast may be extra or limited for instance. So yes, we pay a little more for hotel rooms, but it's still a lot less than full rate and we get other stuff besides.

Thank Fandom It's Friday!

Dave Hicks and Yvonne Rowse

If Novacon 42 is going to be your first ever Novacon, then let me assure you that a programme chock full of informative, intellectual and witty people has been meticulously planned months in advance. If Novacon 42 *isn't* your first Novacon, if you know me, or Yvonne Rowse, with whom this year I'm sharing the crisis management and emotional blackmail that is a typical convention programmer's life, then we can dispense with such lies.

As usual people join or drop out at the last minute, thwarting schemes or inspiring new thoughts in the remaining functional brain cells Yvonne and I can muster between us, and ideas that sounded good over pizza last January are discarded in favour of stuff that will actually work. Let me give you an example: about ten years ago I turned up on the Thursday night before the con to see an elderly gentleman sat in a corner of the hotel bar who looked vaguely familiar. It was Harry Harrison. We rewrote the programme there and then.

I truly think (at least for Novacon) this gives us a programme that chimes with what people are talking about in the bar, the book room, and on line. It's terrifying sometimes but it's kind of the only way we know how to do it, and hyperbole aside, I am, as usual, expecting to be proud of what Novacon can put on stage.

We've always put on interesting science and this year we have Dr Tony Padilla from Nottingham University, home of the superb *Sixty Symbols* science web site, to talk about parallel universes and Dr James Sumner from Manchester Uni to talk about Alan Turing and beer. No, not at the same time – but extensive research has shown that the two things a typical Novacon member is most fascinated by are science and beer, so it was perfectly logical to find a speaker who can combine these.

As we mentioned, the book auction's been moved 'off piste' (insert your own jokes) to the downstairs bar late Saturday night and we're hoping to have a few interesting events down there over the weekend – announcements will be made and notices posted.

Generally you can expect science and literature to dominate the daylight hours while Saturday night will be about fandom, culminating in a traditional no-holds-barred, undignified Novacon game show

incorporating a tribute – at Novacon *forty two* – to Douglas Adams who would have been 60 this year.

We will end with the beer tasting and convention meal. We do sympathise with those of you who have to be back at work on Monday morning and can't stay who ask if we couldn't do this earlier in the weekend. However logistically it's only possible to do once the convention has been cleared away and only such good fun because it's all over.

Meanwhile our excellent Guest of Honour Jaine Fenn has a collection of short stories out. As has become our custom, we're planning a little celebration, with perhaps complementary booze if you're lucky, and a chance to get copies signed by Jaine. Which brings us to…

Friday Night

As always, the programme is subject to change but we're quietly confident the first night of the convention will look like this…

7.00pm **Opening Ceremony**. Some wackiness and possibly even zaniness. But not too much. Meet the Committee. Meet Jaine. Useful information about the rest of weekend will be given.

7.30 **Thank Fandom It's Friday!** Steve Green (who else?) kicks off the convention with our GoH Jaine Fenn and some surprise guests, buses and lawyers permitting.

9.00 **Book Launch Party.** Jaine has new work out and we like to celebrate our guest's success and socialise on the first night of the convention.

10.30 **You can't handle the truth!** A discussion about conspiracy and paranoia in science fiction *and* fandom. Why are we so much more attracted to the idea of conspiracy then cock-up? Do aliens really walk among us? Are *you* a SMOF?

Art Show

Don't forget you don't have to be an artist to be in the art show We are actively encouaging owners of artwork to bring it along for display and, if you wish to sell it, put it in the art auction.

Off Piste Poetry

Chris Morgan is planning an item about poetry in the downstairs Off Piste Programme room. It will take place on Staurday afternoon. Anybody who is interested can bring some of their own poetry to be read out and discussed.

TAFF Begins

John Coxon

Novacon is, in a very real way, the beginning of TAFF. The historical origin of the fan fund lies with Walt Willis' trip to America in 1952, before Novacon was even a glint in the Birmingham Science Fiction Group's eye. Obviously, that's not what I'm talking about: I mean a somewhat different beginning. It's November. Worldcon is fading from memory, Eastercon is safely in the spring of the next year, and so the TAFF administrator has a chance to catch his breath, write a newsletter and get this show, as they say, on the road. Novacon's position in the year makes it the perfect time to launch the next westbound TAFF race to a crowd of eager British and European fans.

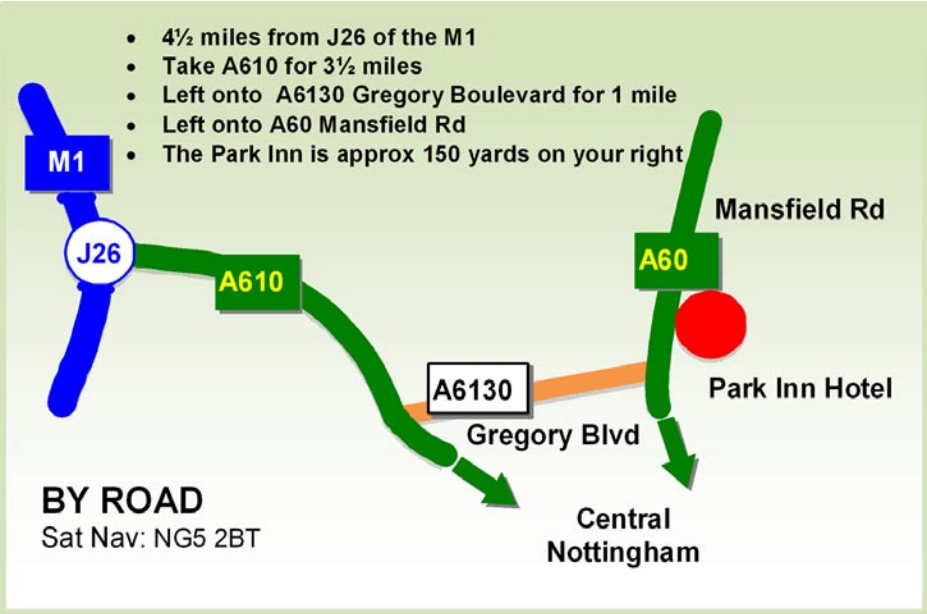
In 2010, I attended Novacon (with a sinus infection and a splitting headache) as Steve Green opened up the nominations for the TAFF candidate to Renovation, 2011's Worldcon. I told people I planned to run for TAFF and I talked to my potential nominators, all the while taking huge amounts of painkillers. This year, I don't have a sinus infection and it's me that's opening the next westbound TAFF race, which will be taking one lucky European fan to LoneStarCon 3, in San Antonio, Texas, between 29th August and 2nd September 2013.

More details will be in the Novacon programme book and also in a TAFF newsletter floating around the convention, but let me just wrap up by telling you a little about my experiences with TAFF. I spent a month in North America, staying with fans in Toronto, Kent, Seattle, Lake Tahoe, Reno and Santa Clara (in the San Francisco Bay Area). I can say, without hesitation, that it was the best month of my life. I got to present a Hugo Award, I got a girlfriend, I got amazing food, great beer, amazing experiences, the generosity of a hundred fans and a great many new friends.

Sound good? Then keep an eye out for more details at Novacon.

How to Get There

A Cat Coast Guide



(Even if coming from the South, it's easier to use J26 of the M1)

By Public Transport

NOTE: This is all offered in good faith – bus info checked very recently but feel free to check latest info at www.nctx.co.uk.

You'll arrive at Nottingham Railway Station or next door Broadmarsh Bus Station.

If there's two or more of you, a taxi costs about £6 or so.

Cheapest option from the Railway station or Broadmarsh Bus depot is to walk up through the town (see below) until you get to the bus stops on Lower Parliament Street. The walk is 15 – 20 minutes and up hill most of way so if this is a problem consider a taxi.

Walking through the town: the main railway station has two exits. If you go out of the side exit you arrive onto Station Street turn left and then

right onto Carrington Street. If you go out of the main entrance you are on Carrington Street where you turn right. Go over the canal; walk past the entrance to Broadmarsh Bus Station (travellers from Broadmarsh should pick up directions at this point); walk up to Collin Street and cross at pelican and go into the entrance of the Broadmarsh Shopping Centre to the left. Walk straight through the Shopping Centre and emerge into a shopping precinct: Lister Gate. Keep walking up the hill and you should emerge into the huge Old Market Square characterised by fountains, town hall etc. Keep walking up, go up either Market Street or Queen Street and you will find yourself on Upper Parliament Street. Turn right for Lower Parliament Street. Watch out for trams!

At Lower Parliament Street you can catch a bus from a number of stops. There's six buses going up the Mansfield Road and the journey takes about 7 minutes. The bus stands are in the "P" zone; purple routes: numbers **87**, **88** and **89** and the lime green routes: **56**,**58** and **59**, found near to Age UK and Spa. Buses are frequent. Single fare £1.70- exact change please.

After about 2 miles, look out on the left and you'll see a cemetery while going down a hill: the bus will cross a large roundabout with flowerbeds. This is the junction with Gregory Boulevard. The stop immediately after is Clarendon College and you should get off here.

There's a Pelican crossing 20 yards up, cross here and the Park Inn is 80 yards further up the road. If you go past a pub called the Grosvenor, you've gone too far and need to get off bus sharpish and walk back.

Adventurous fans may wish to take the tram to the bus stops. These can be easily accessed via the railway station – simply follow the signs. From Broadmarsh, exit left to Carrington Street, cross the canal bridge and turn left into Station Street. The lifts to the Tram terminus are about 50 yards down on the left. Get on a tram and a conductor will take your fare – you can get a combined tram and bus day ticket and your conductor will give change, but will not accept £20 or £50 notes. Get off at the Royal Centre and cross the road to walk past the Theatre Royal towards Lower Parliament Street.

2012 Nova Awards

We hope that by now you are aware that at the closing of each Novacon there's an award ceremony where a small trophies are handed out to the best Fanzine, Fan Editor and Fan Artist as voted for by you.

Yes YOU and to encourage you to vote the Novacon website contains a list of elegible fanzines as compiled by Nova Award administrator, Steve Green. Plus, for the first time ever, you can now vote on-line. You can find a voting form at www.novacon.org.uk/nova_award_ballot.php.

So there's no excuse that you didn't have time at the convention or you mislaid the ballot form or your pencil broke or the dog ate all your fanzines. Go do it before the convention.

Now here's more encouragement for you to vote.

Oh, Them Golden Slipsheets...

Mike Meara

Those of you who have been paying proper attention to your Novacon progress reports will be aware that The Management have made several important changes to the terms and conditions of the Nova award. These changes cover who can vote, what they can vote for and how they can do it. This is in response to the continuing decline in the Nova's fortunes, the aim being to make it once again a thing of beauty and a joy for the foreseeable future.

The decline is a fact, but the reasons for it are open to debate. A simple, perhaps even trivial explanation is that fanzines have not, in essence, changed all that much over the decades, whereas fandom has broadened, diversified and become ever more complex; thus there is today proportionally less interest in fanzines among fandom in general than there was in 1973 when the Novas were inaugurated. What do *you* think?

I imagine that the fanzine fans of today would not be averse to (the return of) a great Golden Age, though perhaps they would argue about when exactly the *last* Golden Age was, and if indeed there ever was one at all. When I discovered fandom in the early 1970s, I considered,

perhaps naively, that it consisted of just three parts: conventions, fanzines - and the fan groups (plus the odd gruop) whose members often organised the former and produced many of the latter. In those days there were not many cons, but plenty of fanzines, including, I thought, some pretty good ones, though my own first efforts were not in that category. But that was forty years ago, and I was aware even then that many legendary fanzine titles had been dormant or dead for years. If the Golden Age of fanzines was therefore considerably pre-1970, then the fortunes of fanzines have been declining and falling for fifty years or more, and the barbarians – insert your personal choice of unfavoured fringe fan activity here – must surely be at the gates, and perhaps have already appropriated choice bits for steampunk outfits and melted the rest down for scrap.

There are still fanzines around, including, I think, some pretty good ones, but they are fewer in number than I would wish, and some of their editors are Old and Tired. I know I am. What can be done? Here's a simple three-step plan:

Firstly, if you know any fanzine fans who aren't members of Novacon but who are otherwise eligible to vote under the revised rules, please make the rule change known to them, as they may not have picked up on it yet. Secondly, you (and of course, they) can familiarise yourselves with who and what you'd like to vote for; sadly, this is not as onerous a task as it might be – all that declining and falling, remember.

And finally, you (and of course, they) can actually vote. No point in all the other stuff if you don't do that. Not at the con itself, though, I'd suggest. You may not have time to do it properly. Novacon is for doing not-quite-all the things that can only be done at Novacon. You will all have your own ideas about what those things are – one of them might be, for instance, discussing the decline of the Nova – but voting in the Novas need not be one of them. Instead, do this in advance, online, on the website, with all the necessary information to hand. I know I have.

All this costs nothing but time. It will make The Management happy, and that can only be good. It will also make some old (and not so old) faneds, and their contributors, *very* happy (and some others less happy, but awards do that). But the more of you that vote, the happier they'll *all* be, I expect. I know I will.

Novacon 42 Membership

as at 04 October 2012 (Total number 200)

1	Jaine Fenn
2	Dave Weddell
28	½r
31	Michael Abbott
166	Michael Ainsley
165	Graham Ainsley
6	Brian Aldiss
87	Brian Ameringen
88	Meriol Ameringen
161	Chris Amies
115	Jim Anderson
141	Tina Anghelatos
109	Margaret Austin
22	Simon Baldin
5	Iain M Banks
17	Barbara-Jane
172	Allen Baum
140	Jacey Bedford
144	Doug Bell
41	Alan Bellingham
124	Austin Benson
8	Tony Berry
156	John Bilton
9	Helena Bowles
168	Simon Bradshaw
72	Claire Brialey
192	Chris Brooks
27	Pat Brown
26	Vernon Brown
105	Ian Brown
150	Alison Buck
142	Peter Buck
129	Charlotte Bulmer
61	Jonathan Cain
60	Marianne Cain
59	Steven Cain
62	David Carlile
10	Cat Coast
177	Noel Collyer
133	Steve Cooper
49	Dave Cox
145	John Coxon
100	Margaret Croad
106	Helen Cross
20	Julia Daly
90	Christine Davidson
89	Michael Davidson
30	Malcolm Davies
107	Steve Davies
181	Robert Day
108	Giulia De Cesare
197	Jim De Liscard
43	Simon Dearn
111	Theresa Derwin
85	Paul Dormer
127	Stephen Dunn
128	Roger Earnshaw
110	Martin Easterbrook
182	Cathryn Easthope
57	Sue Edwards
84	Janet Edwards
83	John Edwards
153	Anna Feruglio Dal Dan
188	Deborah Fishburn
94	Flick
149	Mike French
96	Gwen Funnell
78	Ron Gemmell
155	Carol Goodwin
65	Niall Gordon
112	Steve Green
148	Susan Griffiths
136	David Haddock
19	Dave Hardy
189	Colin Harris
194	Moira Harrison
7	Harry Harrison
139	Peter Harrow
12	John Harvey
11	Eve Harvey
116	Fiona Harvey
56	Julian Headlong
118	Penny Hicks
117	Dave Hicks
38	Martin Hoare
25	Dave Holmes
24	Bogna Hutchinson
23	Dave Hutchinson
104	Rob Jackson
186	Edward James
119	Andy Jenkins
120	Janet Jenkins
36	Al Johnston
39	Sue Jones
184	Kari
47	Tim Kirk

143	Christina Lake
37	Dave Lally
97	Dave Langford
200	Alice Lawson
13	Steve Lawson
33	Peter Mabey
135	Dave Mansfield
169	Siân Martin
34	Rory McLean
152	Alex McLintock
3	John Meaney
4	Yvonne Meaney
91	Pat Meara
92	Michael Meara
187	Mark Meenan
196	Meike
185	Farah Mendlesohn
63	Pauline Morgan
64	Chris Morgan
159	Ian Morley
131	John Mottershead
122	Jim Mowatt
123	Carrie Mowatt
86	Caroline Mullan
176	Chris Murphy
126	Anthony Naggs
183	Phil Nanson
180	Hazel Newman
179	Robert Newman
82	James Odell
158	June O'Donnell
157	John O'Donnell
51	Omega
121	Morag O'Neill
130	Charles Partington
68	Andrew Patton
52	Hal Payne
50	Harry Payne
53	Jodie Payne
71	Mali Perera
175	John Peters
162	Heather Petty
114	Rog Peyton
102	Catherine Pickersgill
101	Greg Pickersgill
160	Louise Plester
73	Mark Plummer
167	Pete Randall
40	Colette Reap
42	Roger Robinson
98	Tony Rogers
171	Steve Rogerson
193	Angela Rosin
174	Marcus Rowland
15	Yvonne Rowse
154	Edwin Rydberg
190	Ian Sales
134	Jamie Scott
16	Mike Scott
58	Alison Scott
93	Harpal Singh
191	Mark Slater
44	Martin Smart
35	Robert Smith
45	Melica Smith
170	James E Snelling
54	Adrian Snowdon
29	Kate Solomon
55	Ian Sorensen
103	Douglas Spencer
14	Richard Standage
18	Tim Stannard
76	Chris Stocks
164	Alex Storer
77	Neil Summerfield
198	James Sumner
151	Colin Tate
79	George Ternent
80	Linda Ternent
81	Calvin Ternent
69	Markus Thierstein
99	David Thomas
132	Sue Thomason
74	Neil Tomkinson
75	Alison Tomkinson
48	Dave Tompkins
113	Heloise Tudor
163	Sandra Unerman
199	Leucha Veneer
46	Jim Walker
95	Peter Wareham
137	Alan Webb
70	Gerry Webb
147	Ian Whates
173	Donna White
138	Peter Wilkinson
21	Bridget Wilkinson
125	Caro Wilson
32	Anne Wilson
146	Ellie Winpenny
66	Anne Woodford
67	Alan Woodford
195	Mark Woods
178	Diane Young

The **Birmingham Science Fiction Group** was founded in 1971 to enable local and not so local fans to get together to discuss science fiction and related topics.

We meet on the second Friday of every month, 7:45pm at the Briar Rose Hotel on Bennett's Hill in Birmingham, just 5 minutes walk from New Street Station and handy for all bus routes. We usually start the evening with a guest speaker, often a professional in the field such as Brian Aldiss, Terry Pratchett or Peter Hamilton.

If you live anywhere in or around the West Midlands, the BSFG is the group for you! For further information, and a copy of our monthly newsletter, please:

Email: **bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk**

Visit our website: **www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk**